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Chairperson: Mr. Mićić (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Serbia)

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In the absence of Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Mr. Mićić (Serbia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 56: Groups of countries in special situations (*continued*)

(a) Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (*continued*) (A/64/80-E/2009/79)

(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation (*continued*) (A/64/268)

1. **Mr. Jiménez Sauma** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the magnitude of the financial, economic, food and climate crises indicated that a change in development paradigms was necessary. The financial and economic crisis would have a greater impact on the least developed countries, because of their high levels of debt. During 2009, trade would contract by 9 per cent, the highest contraction since 1945. That, together with the drop in prices of raw materials on the global market and protectionist measures taken by developed countries, added up to a bleak outlook for the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. A prompt and satisfactory conclusion of the Doha Round negotiations was thus essential. Additional, predictable assistance for development, in the form of speedy loans on flexible terms, was urgently necessary.

2. A political commitment to fight climate change was needed in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The least developed countries had made progress on the MDGs, particularly in the areas of health and education, but better access to water and sanitation was needed, and not enough progress had been made on gender equality in education. There had been no progress whatsoever in the area of maternal mortality. Malnutrition was worsening, particularly among women and children. In the least developed countries, nearly 50 per cent of the population lived in extreme poverty.

3. Haiti was the only member of the Rio Group which was a least developed country. Solidarity with Haiti in the region was active and resolute.

4. The Almaty Programme of Action was a strong framework for fostering partnerships, and its implementation should be further accelerated. The consequences of the financial and economic crisis would be more acute for the landlocked countries, and their challenges and vulnerabilities should be recognized. Addressing the special needs of landlocked countries in the Rio Group's region would also benefit countries of transit.

5. **Mr. Ali** (Yemen) said that the recent crises had made it impossible for less developed countries to meet the MDGs by 2015. The international community must therefore make a concerted effort to assist them in facing the challenges thus posed. In that connection, his country would participate actively in the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the MDGs, at which no new commitments should be sought; instead, Member States should focus on the creation of new and effective mechanisms so that donor States could fulfil their existing commitments.

6. His country had been greatly affected by the decline in the price of oil, the sale of which constituted nearly 75 per cent of its national income. The Government had been forced to cut its spending by 50 per cent in 2009, which had slowed development efforts and the fight against poverty. The recent food crisis had nearly wiped out the gains made over the past eight years in the struggle against malnutrition. According to Government statistics, more than 20 per cent of Yemeni families faced food insecurity, and nearly 7 per cent of them were living in severe hunger. According to some international reports, Sana'a would become the first capital city in the world to exhaust its supply of drinking water by 2025.

7. His delegation called on donor States to take additional practical measures to fulfil their official development assistance (ODA) commitment of 0.2 per cent of gross national income (GNI) to the least developed countries. In that connection, his Government called on the international community to reconsider the amount of ODA given to Yemen, as the amount it received per capita was less than half what it was in other countries with a similar economic profile.

8. Foreign debt was an onerous burden for the least developed countries, as servicing it detracted from

expenditure on achieving the MDGs. The developed countries and international financial institutions should therefore act urgently to cancel debt or provide debt relief.

9. **Ms. Namgyel** (Bhutan) said that the least developed countries were vulnerable to developments beyond their control and for which they were not responsible. The Brussels Programme of Action had proven appropriate and relevant, and progress had been made towards meeting its goals and targets. Many least developed countries that had implemented it had experienced steady growth in the agreed areas. However, much of the progress achieved could be reversed as a result of the current crises and the numerous and severe natural disasters of recent years.

10. Bhutan had been one of the first countries to conduct a Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment and Costing exercise. According to the results of that exercise, Bhutan would need some 2.5 billion dollars between 2006 and 2015 to achieve the Goals. However, due to the subsequent crises and destruction caused by recent floods and earthquakes, that figure would now be much higher. While Bhutan was on track to achieve most of the MDGs, it was hoped that the recent setbacks and crises would not impede progress.

11. The preparatory processes for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries set for 2011 and the Conference itself must be used to increase the impetus generated by the Brussels Programme of Action. ODA was the most important source of external financing for many least developed countries. The total amount required for the least developed countries to achieve their MDGs was probably far in excess of what donors had so far committed.

12. **Mr. Korea** (Togo) said that the least developed countries had experienced numerous difficulties in an extremely short period of time, including an increase in oil prices, which had caused inflation to rise and hampered growth; an increase in food prices, which, rather than helping farmers, had led to higher seed prices and tighter credit; a worsening economic situation and development prospects and a drop in demand for exports.

13. The crises compromised budgetary viability. Public debt and limited access to international capital markets meant that the least advanced countries had few opportunities to borrow the funds needed to meet obligations under the Brussels Programme of Action and the MDGs.

14. The situation was even worse in Togo than elsewhere, as its development partners had suspended assistance for 15 years owing to the socio-political crisis from which the country had just emerged. Each day, the country was moving further and further from meeting its development goals. While there had been progress on political, institutional and economic governance, the targets for growth and investments rate would not be met. There was still much to do in the areas of education, health and employment, in particular for young people and women. Investment was down in all sectors. Serious flooding had had devastating effects. The Government had decided to mainstream environmental issues into its development strategies and programmes. Overall, the situation was grim, and it had been made worse by a drop in ODA. Now was the time for the wealthy countries to take bold measures to assist the least developed countries.

15. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the developed countries should lower barriers to exports from the least developed countries and reduce subsidies for their own exports. The Doha Round should be brought to a successful conclusion. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be adopted and applied in the context of negotiations for a new climate change agreement. Development partners should consider increased funding for climate change adaptation in the least developed countries. Additional resources must be made available to feed the most vulnerable, as hunger continued to spread. The debt crisis, one of the greatest economic disasters of all time, must be reconsidered in the light of the current context.

16. **Mr. Gotta** (Ethiopia) said that the least developed countries had not benefited from globalization, remaining marginalized in spite of all their efforts to integrate into the global economic mainstream. It was incumbent upon the international community to assist them. The least developed countries had made considerable efforts to fulfil their commitments under the Brussels Programme of Action. As a result, their gross domestic product (GDP) had grown markedly, poverty had declined, good governance was taking root and progress was being made towards universal education. They had attracted some foreign direct investment, promoted tourism and

made strenuous efforts to diversity their export base. Nonetheless, the share of least developed countries in foreign direct investment was low, and the bulk of it was concentrated in a few resource-rich countries, while their shares of global tourism and trade were under 1 per cent. Supply side and demand side constraints limited the utilization rate of preferential market access by the least developed countries.

17. The least developed countries had made credible efforts to respond to the difficult socio-economic situation, but they had suffered due to crises not of their making. While it was encouraging that ODA to those countries had grown, it still fell short of the Brussels Programme target. Only 8 of the 22 Development Assistance Committee countries had met the target.

18. During the past 18 years, Ethiopia had been undergoing political and economic transformation, with impressive results. Ethiopians now went to the polls every five years, and the economy had seen double-digit growth for the past five years, with similar growth expected for the current year. Significant headway had been made against poverty. Many measures had been taken to create an enabling environment in the private sector, and the private sector had mushroomed. According to recent figures, primary school enrolment stood at 97 per cent.

19. Since the founding of the Group of Least Developed Countries in 1971, its membership had increased from 23 to 49. Only two countries had graduated from the group. That was indicative of a collective failure. Weaknesses and failures must be looked at critically, and an appropriate course of action for the ensuing decade must be charted, leading to successful graduation from the group of larger numbers of countries.

20. In accordance with the Almaty Programme of Action, Ethiopia had taken measures to support the transit and transport sector, including establishing railway corporations, a dry port services enterprise and a maritime affairs authority. Dry ports were under construction, and one was already operational. There was a project to develop 5,000 kilometres of a national railway over the next five to seven years. Ethiopia's airline industry led those of all the other least developed countries. Ethiopian Airlines had flights not only to all contiguous countries but also to a number of other destinations in Africa and the rest of the world. Telecommunications were being modernized and a major investment had been made in roads.

21. **Mr.** Mohamed Cherif **Diallo** (Guinea) said that despite signs of recovery, the least developed countries continued to suffer greatly as a result of the economic crisis. Not only were they unable to afford to respond to the current crisis, but there was also the risk that development progress made in recent years could be reversed. In that context, recent commitments by the Group of Twenty (G-20) to aid the least developed countries were welcome.

22. From 2004 through 2007, the least developed countries had achieved an average annual growth rate of 7 per cent. That percentage had dropped slightly in 2008 and was expected to drop further in 2009. There had been considerable progress in reducing conflict, achieving stability, advancing democracy, promoting the rule of law, combating corruption and moving towards grass-roots decision-making, gender equality and universal access to primary education. However, poverty had been rolled back only slightly, and the share of the least developed countries in world trade remained slight. HIV rates, though down, were still high, and malaria remained a leading cause of infant mortality.

23. Bold action was called for. Donors were urged to work to bring down the external debt of the least advanced countries and remove obstacles to the export of products from those countries. The least developed countries had suffered more than others from the breakdown in the Doha Round.

24. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) said that palpable progress had been made on some of the Brussels Programme of Action commitments, but owing to the financial and economic crises, which had compounded the effects of the food, energy and climate change crises, those results might not be lasting. While economic growth in Africa between 2004 and 2008 had been 6 per cent, in 2009 it would probably go down to 2 per cent. The economies of the African countries rested to a large extent on export of natural resources, whose prices were now in free fall. Africa had been hit hard by the drop in export revenue and foreign investment. In that connection, the least developed countries were urged to participate actively in the negotiations on a pilot programme for the launch of the activities of the International Migrants Remittances Observatory. Benin

was chairing the pilot programme working group of the Observatory.

25. Africa was forced to follow pro-cyclical policies and to accept rigid conditions to receive support from the international financial institutions, while the developed countries had the luxury of taking advantage of counter-cyclical measures to relaunch their economies.

26. The conditions for integrating Africa into the world economy needed to be reconsidered, and an approach developed which would allow the African countries to benefit from their comparative advantages in order to improve living conditions and eliminate extreme poverty. The least developed countries should receive financial support. Unmet commitments should be fulfilled so that the development goals could be met.

27. Benin supported the efforts of the Secretary-General, through the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) to organize the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

28. **Mr. Gaumakwe** (Botswana) said that landlocked developing countries faced particular challenges. High transportation costs complicated their business and trade activity. According to the report of the Secretary-General, landlocked countries in Africa paid 33 per cent more in inland transportation costs than did landlocked countries elsewhere in the world. That meant that commodities originating from landlocked developing countries, especially those in Africa, were less competitively priced. At the same time, the cost of moving such goods, when added to input costs, meant that many goods and services were out of reach of many people in the developing world.

29. Botswana valued the support and cooperation it received from transit and coastal neighbouring States, which granted use of their railway systems, ports and roads for the movement of Botswana's imports and exports. Its location meant that Botswana was one of the principal transit countries serving the corridor linking South Africa and Namibia to the west and the corridor linking the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia in the north to South Africa in the south.

30. Efforts should be made in the provision of infrastructure and technology to cover the entire routes of transport and trade corridors. Investment in only part of a trade route would undermine export performance and receipts for the whole region. Investment in regional transport corridors, information systems and modern customs facilities at border crossings was necessary for economic diversification. OHRLLS should continue assisting the landlocked developing countries through resource mobilization. Donor countries should consider increasing infrastructure spending beyond 10 per cent of bilateral ODA for sub-Saharan Africa.

31. **Ms. Adam** (Maldives) said that her Government attached great importance to the full implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the attainment of the MDGs. The current economic, food and climate change crises were likely to slow down, or even reverse, progress towards reducing poverty.

32. The General Assembly had decided five years earlier to graduate Maldives from the least developed countries, and its transition period leading to graduation in 2011 had already begun. In the current turbulent economic environment, graduating from the least developed countries within two years posed a unique challenge. Maldives had formulated a long-term smooth transition strategy. Economic and Social Council resolution E/2009/L.35, adopted by consensus on 29 July 2009, had called for an independent system-wide assessment of United Nations support for small island developing States.

33. The financial and economic situation had seriously undermined trade, financial flows, jobs, investment, remittances, debt servicing and tourism in Maldives. The continued deadlock in the Doha Round was a source of concern. The economic crisis should not serve as an excuse to stall ODA, trade, debt relief, investment and technology transfer commitments. Developed countries should refrain from building protectionist measures into economic stimulus packages.

34. Environmental degradation was the biggest threat to socio-economic progress in Maldives. Small island developing States could not afford inaction. Such States contributed the least to global warming, yet their very existence was threatened. Extreme weather patterns had forced Maldives to divert limited resources to programmes designed to enable the

country to survive climate impacts. Maldives planned to become carbon-neutral within 10 years, and in November 2009 would be hosting a forum of States vulnerable to climate change.

35. Maldives had embarked on major economic reform to generate revenue, develop infrastructure and improve public services through a programme of privatization, public-private partnerships and investments. Because it imported most of its food and all of its energy resources, Maldives had suffered greatly from high food and oil prices.

36. **Mr. Carbajal** (United States of America) said that his Government was committed to working with least developed country partners as part of the global response to the world recession, rising food insecurity and caring for the sick. The United States was consulting with those partner nations on collective efforts to overcome the world financial crisis and improve the global financial architecture.

37. The United States would be committing at least $3.5 billion over the following three years to promote agricultural development in developing countries, had catalysed momentum at the 2009 Group of Eight Summit in L'Aquila, Italy, where donors had collectively committed $20 billion to that goal, and was committed to working with its least developed country partners to advance and implement country-led agricultural development programmes and strategic coordination. His Government had also launched a major health initiative that would benefit many least developed countries: it had set aside $63 billion to combat HIV/AIDS, end deaths from tuberculosis and malaria, eradicate polio and strengthen public health systems, and had joined with other countries to contribute vaccines for influenza A (H1N1) to the World Health Organization.

38. **Mr. Aguiar Patriota** (Brazil) said that tariff preferences for agricultural and commodity exports from least developed countries to developed countries were not a stable or reliable means of helping them achieve market access; liberalization of trade in agriculture was preferable. Moreover, a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round would be crucial to help those countries to meet their development objectives.

39. Least developed countries were affected differently by the economic crisis depending on their situation, as well as on their levels of debt sustainability and exposure to the effects of climate change. Social protection policies and measures were a critical component in national and international responses to the economic shockwaves that had affected developing countries in 2008 and 2009. The decisions taken by G-20 leaders had been a welcome step towards stabilization of conditions for the continued growth and welfare of least developed countries, and Brazil continued to support such measures as a means to boost trade and safeguard development in low-income countries. Developed countries needed to deliver on their ODA commitments and continue to improve on the transparency, accountability and local ownership of assistance provided. South-South cooperation in particular should be further enhanced and supported by the United Nations development system as a complementary means to help support implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. Efforts in that regard should not follow Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development principles of aid effectiveness, but principles and guidelines accommodating the specific characteristics of South-South cooperation, based on solidarity, equality, mutuality and local ownership. The upcoming Conference on South-South Cooperation in Nairobi would be an opportunity to discuss that, and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Unit for Economic Cooperation and Integration among Developing Countries of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should provide the required support in that endeavour, in cooperation with OHRLLS.

40. The reference made in the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (A/64/80) to a possible linkage between funding for cooperation and levels of carbon emissions was surprising; it did not reflect any internationally agreed understanding, and South-South cooperation was not subject to any overarching mandatory obligation. The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would provide an opportunity to evaluate the effects of the current economic situation on implementation of the Programme of Action, and address possible weaknesses and uneven progress in that regard.

41. In Latin America, efforts to tackle the issue had received the crucial support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and resulted in several important initiatives, including a report by that Commission and OHRLLS on the transport situation of landlocked and transit countries in Latin America which provided a positive evaluation of the regional projects outlined in the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America, implementation of which contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action. A working group on infrastructure had also been created under the Union of South American Nations, to analyse integration projects and funding, some of which were of potential value and interest to South American landlocked developing countries.

42. **Mr. Lukwiya** (Uganda) said that Uganda belonged to both groups of countries in special situations, and successful implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action was a priority for his Government. With the support of the United Nations system and other development partners, Uganda had made efforts to implement the specific actions called for in both programmes of action, but implementation was affected by the disproportionate impacts of the current economic, financial, energy and food crises, with climate change having particularly affected the transport infrastructure of landlocked developing countries. Despite the recent rise in primary commodity prices, the multiple constraints those countries faced had prevented effective diversification of their productive capacities, and the extreme price volatility in 2008 had significantly affected their economies. The severe difficulties faced by least developed and landlocked developing countries had greatly weakened the competitiveness of their domestic economic operators, leading to low overall economic performance and thus to increased poverty in many of them.

43. If it struck a right balance, cooperation at the subregional and regional levels, including South-South cooperation, had great potential to help reduce poverty in those countries. Uganda had played a role in that respect through its continued support for the strengthening of the East African Community (EAC). Also, as both a landlocked and a transit country, it had contributed through a transport corridor linking various countries in the region to the port of Mombasa and had hosted a tripartite summit to discuss the creation of a free trade area across three of Africa's main regional economic communities — the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, EAC and the Southern African Development Community. Another initiative with great potential for helping the broader region was the development, financing and implementation of joint infrastructure programmes and cross-border projects. All those fundamental policy developments helped to integrate the economies of least developed and landlocked developing countries into the global trading system.

44. Integrated and coordinated support from the international community, particularly its commitment to a universal, open, equitable, rules-based and non-discriminatory trading system, was essential to help those countries to successfully achieve their goals. Uganda thus called on all members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to secure the conclusion of the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference held in Hong Kong in 2005, and to work towards the elimination of all forms of export subsidies by 2013 and towards duty-free and quota-free market access for products from least developed countries. Also important were the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Least Developed Countries and Aid for Trade; such aid should constitute additional resources rather than recycle existing official development aid, and could not be a substitute for the successful outcome of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations. ODA was a key requirement for and supplement to growth and development in both least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, and in order to fulfil the internationally agreed commitments in the framework of the MDGs, donors must continue to work towards meeting their targets. Achieving the objectives of the Brussels and Almaty Programmes of Action required greater donor focus on enhancing the productive capacity of those groups of countries and increased aid to physical infrastructure, particularly roads and railways.

45. **Mr. Tag-Eldin** (Egypt) said that while some progress had been made in recognizing the special needs and problems of least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, those countries remained vulnerable to external shocks and to the multiple challenges the international community faced, and were marginalized with respect to international trade. In that respect, special attention should be given

to their needs in the Doha Round. Implementation of the specific actions outlined under the Almaty Programme of Action needed to be accelerated in order to help landlocked developing countries establish efficient transit transport systems. South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation should be strengthened, through donor involvement and cooperation among relevant subregional and regional organizations, so as to help address the special needs of both groups of countries.

46. Since the current food, energy, climate and financial crises would compound the challenges those countries faced in achieving their development objectives and constrain their efforts at programme implementation, development partners must double their efforts to support both groups of countries. To meet the need for sufficient and predictable levels of ODA, developed countries must fulfil their commitments to provide 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income (GNI) to the least developed countries.

47. As a means of support of South-South cooperation, Egypt had established two funds which involved cooperation on a triangular basis as well as with various United Nations bodies and donor countries, provided recipient countries with training and expertise and helped them to build their capacities and improve services for the implementation of national strategies. They also enabled providing humanitarian assistance in response to appeals from United Nations bodies.

48. With reference to paragraph 96 of the Secretary-General's report (A/64/80), Egypt agreed that resources to address the adverse impact of climate change should be additional to ODA flows, but rejected the reference to mandatory contributions being based on countries', including developing countries', level of carbon emissions, as that did not reflect the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, the historical responsibility of developed countries or the terms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

49. **Mr. Dos Santos** (Paraguay) said that it was urgent to ensure the effective and timely implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which would help to incorporate countries like Paraguay into the world's leading markets. As ODA was the main source of funding for landlocked developing countries, he urged the international community and donor agencies to allocate resources to fill the infrastructure funding gaps of those countries. Paraguay gave priority to South-South cooperation, but stressed that it must be complementary to North-South cooperation. Climate change was another priority for Paraguay, which was directly affected by the phenomena of desertification, reduced precipitation, reduced availability of water and extreme weather.

50. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that the United Nations system, in close collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions, should urgently take stock of the impact the current crises were having on countries in special situations. That exercise should include setting out the specific measures that were needed to allow those countries to sustain the growth momentum gained over the years, and to scale up their efforts to move towards the next higher development level, with support and assistance from the international community, in line with its commitments.

51. Pakistan strongly supported both least developed countries and landlocked developing countries in their quest for greater and across-the-board recognition of their special financial and technical needs. It would also work actively towards reaching a prompt decision on the process for preparing the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and, as a transit developing country, actively participated in the Almaty Programme of Action and remained committed to providing easy, efficient and expeditious transit access for its landlocked neighbours, so as to help them expand their international trade. Promoting regional connectivity and becoming a regional transit hub was a central pillar of Pakistan's national vision for its trade and transport sector.

52. Climate change, which posed a challenge to all countries and added a new dimension to the challenges vulnerable countries already faced, required ever more vigilant monitoring of the general global scenario, so that country vulnerabilities and the impact that crises like that of climate change had on poor countries could be accurately assessed, and all the risks and adverse impacts quantified. The Committee for Development Policy could play an important role in that respect and should carry out a full and comprehensive review of the issue of country classification, based on a new, comprehensive and science-based definition of vulnerability covering physical, economic and climate-related aspects.

53. **Mr. Naeemi** (Afghanistan) said that the goals and targets laid out in the Brussels Programme of Action had the components needed to help least developed countries navigate their way towards sustained growth and stability. His Government had taken important steps towards achieving those goals since 2001, in partnership with the international community. It had put millions of children back to school, although difficulties remained in that respect, in rural areas in particular, because of lack of security and terrorist attacks; most Afghans had access to basic health services and the rate of infant and maternal mortality had been significantly reduced; a number of water points had been constructed in the drought- and conflict-affected parts of southern Afghanistan and numerous initiatives had been taken to prevent environmental degradation. However, only about 20 per cent of the entire population as yet had access to safe drinking water. The country had also achieved significant economic growth, which had generated better livelihoods, yet Afghanistan remained one of the poorest countries in the world, with 70 per cent of its population living in poverty. Poverty and unemployment contributed to the increase in terrorist activities in the country, and could jeopardize the gains achieved over the past seven years.

54. His delegation feared that the Brussels Programme of Action was being undermined by the global economic crisis and climate change, as well as by the lack of commitment and implementation by the international community; it hoped that those issues would continue to be addressed in preparation for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

55. Afghanistan appreciated the recognition in the Secretary-General's report of the unique and difficult position many landlocked developing countries found themselves in. Since geographical characteristics would not change, Afghanistan needed to seize the unique opportunity it had to act as a land bridge between Central, South and West Asia. It was aware of its responsibilities to work with neighbouring countries to develop policies and institutional mechanisms to turn that potential into tangible regional projects, and encouraged others in the international community to join those efforts. In addition to being a least developed country and a landlocked developing country, Afghanistan was also dealing with the problems associated with being in a post-conflict situation. It thus hoped that the United Nations system, international organizations and the international community would provide financial and technical support and capacity-building and development assistance to Afghanistan in order to help it to achieve the goals under the Brussels Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals within their respective time frames.

56. **Ms. Garde** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that IPU had been working closely with OHRLLS throughout the decade of the Brussels Programme of Action, to encourage parliaments to become actively involved in its promotion and implementation. The two organizations were striving to remedy the lack of legislative ownership of the Programme of Action process, notably by calling for direct involvement of parliaments in national and regional preparations, more oversight by them and more government accountability with respect to the activities undertaken to implement the Programme of Action. IPU was also encouraging national focal points to submit work programmes on the preparatory process to parliaments. At the global level, it would be organizing a parliamentary forum to provide direct parliamentary input into the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. IPU encouraged all stakeholders to undertake an efficient and full review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, to ensure that the Programme and its successor reflected the priorities and needs of the people of least developed countries; parliaments, as representatives of the people, should be at the forefront of that endeavour.

57. **Mr. Kennedy** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that support from the international community was required to ensure that the gains least developed countries had made in growing their economies and reducing poverty were not lost for reasons beyond their control. The exact nature and implications of the impact of the global economic crisis on the productive sectors among least developed countries was much less clear than that on more developed countries. For that reason, UNIDO, OHRLLS and other agencies including UNCTAD and WTO were co-organizing a conference gathering the ministers of industry and trade of least developed countries, to be held in December 2009, which would develop a plan of action to support those countries in

their efforts to emerge from the crisis on a sustainable path to development.

58. UNIDO was also providing substantial support to the Brussels Programme of Action commitments on building productive capacities to make globalization work for least developed countries and to enhance the role of trade in development; more than 70 per cent of its trade capacity-building programmes were for least developed countries. Support from the international community was needed to ensure that such assistance remained available and to prevent the current financial and economic crisis from impeding the progress many least developed countries had begun making in recent years.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.